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**UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION**  
**IN THE U.S.A.**



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BY  
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## UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION IN THE U.S.A.

*[Text of a public lecture delivered by Dr. Ralph Fuchs,  
Professor of Administrative Law, Indiana University,  
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It is a great privilege for me to be here on this somewhat delayed occasion. The subject is one in which I have a great interest, although I must confess to you, that according to one point of view, I am not entitled to speak on it. You may have read in the newspapers in World War II, if your memory goes back that far, that there was a strong sentiment in the Congress of the United States that the Office of Price Administration should have no personnel except business executives who had "met a pay-roll". That was by way of objection to academic personnel in the Office of Price Administration. Well, I happen never to have occupied an administrative post, so-called, in an institution of higher education. But I have spent a great deal of time in institutions of higher education as a member of the faculty; and as you will see, my conception of this subject includes a place in administration for the members of the faculty.

One does not need to be in India very long to discover, as Prof. Menon has already said, that this subject is one of considerable popular interest. It is receiving attention, I find very frequently in the newspapers, as well as attention at the hands of some of the Indian legislatures from time to time. In the United States the interest is also high, but it is less distributed, I think, among the people at large. And our literature relating to University Administration in recent years, while it has been very important, has been of a slightly more technical nature. Some of you who read the *Public Administration Review* from the United States may have observed that perhaps a year ago there appeared in it a symposium on this subject in which some of the contributors

were students of public administration and others were students and participants in academic administration. We have recently had quite a noteworthy work by former President Dodds of Princeton University on the university presidency in the United States; and we have a steady flow of technical literature emanating from such sources as the American Council on Education, a federated body of educational associations which publishes material on this subject. Also quite recently, a great deal of attention has been given to a challenge to conventional conceptions of University Administration which has been made under the title "Memo to a College Trustee" by two very well-known authors, who have asserted that the place of the Board of Trustees should be much greater than it has been in shaping the educational policy of liberal arts colleges.

So possibly the experience in the United States, in view of your interest in it, will have some value here;" and the thought that it may have, is rendered more justified, I think, by the evident presence in our two countries of similar relevant factors; for the attention that has been given to university administration in both our countries of late stems partly from the size, the complexity, the volume of resources, the rapid growth, and the number of interests effected by university administration. We cannot have simple institutions of higher education and as they grow more complex, administration inevitably becomes of much greater importance than otherwise.

## II

To some extent, academic administration is unique; in other respects it employs methods which are common to it and to the management of other institutions. An examination into university administration requires recognition of both these elements. The concern of the university is, as its name implies, with the universe, with the whole range of human experience, knowledge and purposes in a cosmic framework. The university's functions of testing old ideas and discovering new truths require that it and the

people who work within it be free to direct their activities into fields that seem significant and fruitful in a particular time and place. The university's endeavours may rightly centre at one time in theology, at another in law and the humanities, and then in the physical and social sciences. Hence the policy-determining or legislative element in a university is much larger than in a business or governmental organisation. A business organisation exists to produce particular goods or services, and the quality of its administration can be measured by its success in doing so. Similarly, governmental administration may be gauged by its effectiveness in achieving the ends prescribed for it in constitutions and statutes. University administration, by contrast, involves the steady re-examination and, when necessary, the re-determination of ends as well as means; and this re-examination is carried on by many of the same members of the academic community as perform the institution's daily tasks. The analogy is to a democratically organised society rather than to administration in the ordinary sense of the term. Perhaps my topic should have been 'University Government' rather than simply 'administration' itself. But, if it had been, I think the treatment of the topic would have had to be substantially the same.

Despite their openness to change, universities, like organised societies, do not possess merely transitory characteristics, but rather stable functions and organisational features. Their functions are, I think, threefold. The first is teaching or transmitting the knowledge and wisdom of the past to young people and developing in them the skills and capacities, especially the capacity for critical thought, that are needed in an ongoing society. The second function is research and creative work which centre in universities especially in their graduate divisions, to a greater degree than in any other class of institution. If it were not for the constant search for new knowledge and the development of new forms of expressions in our colleges and universities, our civilization would be immensely poorer than it is. The third function of a university is the training through graduate study of apprentices to carry on future teaching, research and creative work. In other words, the university must refresh

itself from a flow of graduates specially trained to carry on university functions.

The essence of the performance of these functions requires academic freedom, the full freedom of academic minds to explore truth and pursue experiences wherever they may lead. An administration that would confine these activities, or direct them by outside authority, would be alien to the nature of academic endeavour. I will not take time to enlarge upon that point, which is a very important one, but trust that its statement will commend it to you as lying at the very foundation of universities and therefore of university administration.

### III

There seem to have been three principal ways in which academic institutions, including universities, have been established and have had a basic structure imparted to them. One has been for a community of scholars to arrive and assume institutional form, as did the universities of Europe and, I gather, of ancient India. A second way has been for a group of men representing some social interest to establish or to be placed in charge of an institution of higher learning and by employing a faculty and attracting students to develop a college or a university. A third way is for the state to establish by statute a full-blown university organisation with a prescribed structure and distribution of authority—as has been done to meet quickly the educational needs of newly developing countries in many parts of the world.

The second of these ways has been followed in the United States with respect to both private and public institutions. As you perhaps know, the great universities of today that were first to be founded in the United States began as very small private institutions, usually known as colleges. They were started by small groups of people who felt a need for higher education in their communities—the need to train and educate a ministry of religion, the need to provide

instances the need to provide education for the American Indians who abounded in the vicinity. Charters were issued under State law, and sometimes by special legislative enactment, to the people who were starting these institutions, who were given power over the entire institution without any other control than the purposes stated in the Charter issued to them, which as often as not they drafted themselves or had drafted by lawyers for them, they were usually given the power to fill vacancies in their own number; and so the boards of trustees or whatever they might be called, became self-perpetuating from early times down to the present. When these colleges became universities, the basic legal authority over the institutions did not change.

When the need for state institutions came to be felt and constitutional conventions or legislative assemblies considered how to establish these state institutions, the same model was followed. Instead of providing by legislation for the administrative structure of an institution, the almost universal way of proceeding was for provision to be made for the establishment of a board of trustees, usually a rather small board, to which the full legal authority over the state institution was vested, subject of course to the appropriation by the legislature of money for expenditure under the direction of the board, such has remained the pattern of control of our principal state universities and of the state colleges which have come into existence in numerous locations under state legislation, although there has been some relatively slight modification. There have been some statutes enacted, laying down certain requirements for budgeting, for purchasing, or for other specific business aspects of college and university administration. There has also been in a few States legislation or constitutional provision to combine the state institutions, or some of them, in a State under a single board instead of permitting a continuance of separate institutions under independent boards. But, that tendency, although it has been gaining, has still not extended beyond some twelve States and does not represent the American norm; and it affects very few of our great state universities at all.



We have then in the United States the almost universal scheme of small boards of control—though a few of the private ones are rather large—over independent institutions; and virtually the full legal authority with respect to the conduct of the institution is vested in these boards. Obviously such a board drawn from the community and having members engaged in other occupations cannot actually carry on the day-to-day activities of the institutions. There has therefore had to be delegation; and delegation in the first instance has often been to a president, the chief and until recently in many situations the only administrative officer. The President has traditionally been charged with the functions of managing the property, of securing the members of the faculty or, as you would say, of the staff, and of seeing to the enrolment of students and the general conduct of the institution.

In some instances the delegation of certain functions has from an early time been to the faculties, especially in state institutions; but that has been comparatively rare, except with regard to recommending candidates for degrees and, sometimes, discipline of students. Concentration of control, or what one might call an autocratic allocation of authority, has been typical of American colleges and universities so far as the legal forms go. The operating reality, however, has been considerably different. In the first place, from the very beginning, there has been genuine respect for the expertness and professional character of the faculty member or staff member or teacher, call him what you will. Although legally an employee, the American faculty member has been in reality an independent contractor, exercising professional responsibility in his own work; and no president or member of a board of trustees would undertake to say to a member of the faculty what he should teach, or how he should teach it, beyond the injunction that he should remain within the framework of the subject assigned to him. And that has remained a reality despite a change in the nature of the work of faculty members which has come about with increased specialisation. Prof. W.H. Cawley, writing recently about the faculties of American colleges



and universities, noted that in a history of the North-Western University published some years ago, it was revealed that Prof. Oliver March, who served from 1862 to 1899, taught the following subjects at different times: Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Greek, Logic, Mineralogy, Physics and Zoology; and that at Haverford College Prof. Allan Thomas, who was on the faculty from 1878 to 1912, taught at different times American History, Biblical Literature, Constitutional Law, English History, English Literature, Political Economy, and Religion. With small student bodies, such combinations of subjects apparently were necessary; and one might think that the expertness of the teacher in so many fields, viewed through modern eyes, could not have been very great. But these men and others like them, were in all probability highly respected teachers and thinkers, if not research scholars, whose conduct of classes was doubtless carried on independently of administrative authority.

Today, we know how different it is: that not only does a faculty member remain within a key field such as we commonly recognise, like Chemistry or English Literature or French Language and Literature, or something of the kind, but he probably is confined to some minute sub-division of one of these fields. And so in place of a single faculty member, who might determine the content of the curriculum in not only one field but several assigned to him, we have today very large departments which have to carry out the teaching of particular subjects. The determination of the curriculum within these departments is done collectively by the departmental faculties; and individual professional responsibility of the teacher is supplemented by group responsibility. The seat of power with respect to the curriculum in the university is in the faculties, or staffs, of these several departments, proceeding in various ways. Sometimes, the chairman, or head of the department, manages the department with a minimum of consultation with his colleagues. But more commonly the process is a consultative one, and it can be a process carried on with parliamentary forms in faculty meetings.

The growing scope and complexity of universities and the amount of attention that the faculty members must give to their complex subjects make it difficult for them to devote themselves at the same time to the affairs of the institutions as a whole. Whereas one of the eclectic professors in former times might be an active participant in advising the president about many matters, a professor or staff or faculty member today, teaching a particular specialty and playing his role in the department where that speciality falls, is very much less likely to have an opportunity individually to influence the overall administration of the institution. Departments and the professional schools which parallel them outside of the arts and sciences faculties may, moreover, not communicate well with one another.

Another reason for a certain tendency towards division of the university and away from an effective overall control of the institution is the close relationship which often exists between the faculty of a given department or school and the corresponding professional group on the outside. In a meeting of British, Canadian and American law teachers, not long ago, one of the American members said quite frankly that he did not regard himself as primarily a professor, but rather as a lawyer teaching. This attitude can be found in other professional schools too, and perhaps to some extent among advanced scholars in such fields as chemistry, physics, geology, and what have you. It tends to prevent the faculty or staff member and even the dean or principal from concerning himself continuously and effectively with the affairs of the institution as a whole.

#### IV

For a variety of reasons there has developed in the administration of American universities a tendency toward specialized administrations, to which much attention has been given in recent years. It compensates in part for the division of faculties, but gives rise to problems of its own. The president is no longer alone. Far from it. He has vice-presidents who assist him and assume at least preliminary responsibility for different aspects of university

operations: he has a dean of faculties, a dean of students, a dean of each school in the university, and there are coming to be other specialized deans, such as deans of university development who perform a planning function. And, of course, we have many university business officers, who handle the record keeping, the operation of the dormitories as we call them, or hostels as you call them, the operation of student unions, the keeping of academic records, and the conduct of purchasing, investments, and general book keeping. Hence, with us, university administrators have become to some extent a specialised group, the members of which are drawn partly from academic personnel, but in other instances from people who have not engaged in teaching or research in a college or university. So, we have created an additional estate in university government. If the faculties had remained in control or had been placed in control of American institutions of higher education, they would have had to employ a similar corps of administrators to assist them. I do not share the feeling of many American faculty members that the addition of these administrative officers or of the positions they fill was a mistake. I think it was a necessity, although it may have been carried too far in some directions. The result has been that faculty time has been preserved for the essential work of teaching and research.

Another reason for this development is that some aspects of administration require techniques that bear no particular relation to the academic competence of faculty members. To operate a student union is more likely engaging in hotel management or in the management of recreational facilities than it is like engaging in an academic pursuit, even though it has educational aspects. Purchasing of supplies is a business operation. Record keeping requires the same techniques as are employed in the offices of corporations, rather than techniques with which the faculty of an educational institution are familiar.

There have arisen in American higher education at the same time certain tendencies toward strengthening the role of the faculty in the conduct of the universities as integrated institution. The first is the growth of a strong belief in the

ideal of a university as a community of scholars. This belief derives in the United States from 19th century Germany, although of course it has prevailed in the universities of Europe generally. American faculty members have become increasingly conscious that there cannot be a community of scholars within separate departments when so much of what they do is conditioned by the conduct of the institutions as a whole. Therefore, the faculty and staff must find ways to participate in the direction and conduct of the overall administration. Secondly, the democratic ideal has pervaded more and more American institutions, and the conception has grown that any institution composed of large numbers of people should be democratically conducted.

The result in universities has been a growing structure of committees, councils, faculty senates, and meetings, in all of which the individual faculty member or his elected representatives play a part or at least are privileged to do so. Obvious problems of inroads on faculty time result; and the solution has to be found in striking some kind of balance between the faculty member's essential work as a scholar and his clearly desirable participation in these overall institutional affairs. The latter participation must be suitably related to the work of the administrators; for they must live and work together in harmony in the discharge of their responsibilities to the board of trustees which remains legally responsible, and to some extent, morally responsible, for the institution as a whole.

## V

The key figure in the kind of situation I have described is obviously the president of the institution, who corresponds to the Vice-Chancellor here. He is the one person who is responsibly in touch at all times with all the elements in his institution. The burden that rests on his shoulders is one of the greatest that is borne by any of the members of American society by virtue of the positions they hold. Hence the need for statesmanship in the presidencies of our universities is generally recognised. The problem of

securing it and of keeping it in the face of the pressures and the conflicts that arise is one we have not succeeded in solving satisfactorily in all instances, by any means; but there have been some notable successes.

The role of the board of trustees after the evolution that has taken place is complex, and it remains significant. The first and most obvious function of the board is to secure, manage, and preserve the economic resources for the operation of the institution. There are many American faculty members who think that this is all the board should do. They should be good servants, providing the means and allowing academic experts to operate the institutions. Again, I do not share the viewpoint of the objectors, and I do not think it is the view of a majority of American faculty members. I see in the board of control, or board of trustees, a body which has other valuable functions to perform. One of these is to interpret the institution to the community. Many academicians have difficulty in talking to members of the community in ways that can be consistently understood. Our presidents help in this regard, and sometimes they are very effective; but the president is one man in an institution. A board is seven or nine or more, coming from different walks of life. The president may himself be a learned man; but the member of the board, if he is one, usually tries to conceal that fact; and so, if he understands the university, he may be able to explain it to the community better than any one else in the institution. Not many, it must be confessed, do so, but we have some noteworthy instances of success in this regard.

A related function of the board and of its members is to stand as a barrier to harmful community pressures on the university. There have been situations where board members have, instead, transmitted community pressures by, for example, dismissing faculty members or in other ways interfering with the educational programme because certain teaching, research, or public utterances of faculty members met with outside objection. More characteristically, however, the American board of trustees finds ways to inform the

community that it must accept the consequences of academic freedom. I venture to say that the files of the boards of many of our institutions contain copies of letters to protesting parents and others, answering their objections to something that has taken place.

In the state institutions we have, of course, to be particularly watchful of political pressures. You may have read of instances where political pressures have broken through and have adversely affected particular state universities for periods of time. That has been true especially when a demagogic politician has succeeded in winning a governorship and has made the university a victim of his operations. But even in these instances, the effects are usually temporary. When the storm has blown over, the institution, although damaged, usually remains essentially unaltered. More subtle political influences could enter, for example, with respect to appointments or the admission of students. But I think from what I have been able to observe that the instances where this kind of influence has actually been exerted are highly exceptional. The integrity of administrators, faculty members, and boards stands as a barrier; and, on the whole, the community respects the universities.

The board of trustees is also a source of invaluable uncompensated service along various lines to the institution, not only in meetings but also in specialized ways. The skill which members of boards often contribute to the investment of university resources would cost large sums of money when purchased by ordinary investors. Many board members spend much time in studying documents that are sent to them, and in conferring with people concerning university matters; and some become genuine students of educational problems. Such dedicated service may or may not be purchasable; but its free availability to American higher education is a very great asset. The use of board membership to gain personal advantage through transaction with the institutions is comparatively rare.

Finally, the board is a medium through which proper academic responsibility to society comes to be felt and

discharged by members of the academic community. Academic responsibility, notwithstanding the need for academic freedom which I stressed at the outset, is both desirable and necessary if sterility of the university is to be avoided. University education must be meaningful in the eyes of the community and of individuals in the community; and it must concern itself with matters of human importance. Academic freedom and university autonomy do not confer any charter to perpetual existence without reference to service rendered. So, although the operations of the institution must be free, there must be an ultimate accounting to the community; and if that accounting is not convincing to the community, then the institution can hardly expect continuing support. Formally, and I think to a large extent, in reality, the responsibility of the academic part of the university to the American community on the outside is through the board of trustees. It can be more direct, through a legislative investigation, in which the members of the university may be called upon to testify, or there may be public discussion with members of the university community participating. But primarily it is the board which receives an accounting and decides what is to continue and what not. So long as, by means of this interplay, society recognizes the need for academic freedom in the discharge of university functions, and the university recognises that it exists for social purposes and not simply for the purpose of its members, there is no incompatibility between academic freedom and the responsibility of which I am now speaking.

## VI

All this, then, summarizes the way in which, in the United States, through a delicate and changing balance of functions within our universities and of relations with the outside, we have tried to solve, and in some measure have solved, the overall problem of administering these institutions well. The legal structure is far from an embodiment of the entire reality. We have a feeling that the university is in a genuine sense a democratic community of scholars, but that this community needs to be supplemented by other



institutional elements. As purposes and circumstances change, so do the institutions, in an evolving University Administration in the United States.

Similar problems seem to exist in India and in every other country. Starting with the particular institutional framework that has been created, the same essential elements must co-exist in a university. They must, in some ways, develop methods of collaboration, whatever may be the basic structure established by statute or in some other way. I suppose that, as time goes on, we are likely to find the similarities in what is occurring in different countries to be much greater than the differences; for in this one world we have common purposes to serve.

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